

The Senior Trainer

RETENTION

The CAT Principle Part 4: Retention Through Training

Last issue we spoke about Retention Through Appreciation, when we talked about the value of saying "Thank you" and the CAP awards program.

In this, the last in this series of articles explaining the CAT Principle (Communication, Appreciation, and Training), we would like to focus on Retention Through Training. The idea is simple: people will not stay with an organization if they do not know what to do and don't have the means to find out.

Think about a time when you wanted to do something - fix your car, do some homework, anything - and you didn't know what you were doing, or even where to start. What did you do? You looked for direction - a person or book that could tell you how to complete the task. But what if you couldn't find who or what you needed; what if you couldn't understand the directions? It would be very difficult.

The same is true for work in Civil Air Patrol. When new members come to the program they have no idea which end is up. For some people, their only desire in the beginning is to help the organization, but they need guidance as to where they

can best contribute. It's perfectly natural not to know what to do in a new situation.

The more experienced members - no matter what they do for CAP - have an obligation to give their fellow members the direction they need to succeed in CAP. This is just as important to the senior member who has spent 10 years as an administrative officer and wants to become a mission rated observer just as much as it is to the new member at his or her first meeting.

Civil Air Patrol, and the Senior Member Training Program (SMTP) in particular, is an active training program. CAPR 50-17 talks about the scope and framework of senior member learning. The SMTP is based on the "on-the-job" training (OJT) concept, which is ideally suited for how senior members learn. Many senior members have been out of the classroom setting for years, and may feel intimidated by this type of learning environment.

Most seniors learn their civilian jobs by basically doing their job ***under supervision*** and with periodic seminar training assistance to back it up. They are far from being left with no direction, though we agree it's a more informal approach than traditional learning. CAP's SMTP teaching philosophy is no different.

But, it also makes sense that the more we're exposed to a

certain way of learning, the more comfortable we are and easier it is for us to absorb the information presented.

The reason we explained how the SMTP works is so you can more easily administer the program. Since it's based on the "on-the-job" training concept it's an active program for commanders, training officers, and participants. And indeed, to make the SMTP work there is a certain amount of participation involved at all levels.

This includes scheduling the senior side of the meeting to allow for more effective OJT, with an effective Senior Programs Officer and support. One of the Senior Programs Officer's primary tools is the CAP 200 series pamphlets: Specialty Track Study Guides. These pamphlets are your OJT training guides, and you'll find them to be very effective tools.

CAP SMTP is specifically designed to leave a lot of latitude for units to tailor their own programs to best fit the needs of their members. Unit training programs should be continually reviewed to see that they work harmoniously with Group, Wing, Region, and National programs. Perhaps your unit can help a higher echelon by sponsoring training opportunities such as Level I, CPPT, and other major requirement seminars.

The Senior Member Training Program is more than just training for training's sake, it goes back to what we spoke of last month: morale. We all have to work - through Communication, Appreciation, and Training - to keep morale high for ourselves and the people we serve with and for. When members are trained and do their jobs well, their level of pride and satisfaction naturally grows, and they will do more for the unit.

As you've read, these four articles and our retention philosophy are this simple: 1) If you communicate with your people and listen to them, everyone will have the information they need to get the job done. 2) If you thank your people for their contributions, no matter how small, they will remember it and work harder for you. 3) If you train your people continuously, actively, and uniformly, they will have the desire to learn and grow; and to gain the knowledge to get the job done.

This requires effort, not just that of the commanders but of everyone - leaders and followers alike. The leaders must provide the appropriate tools, the followers must participate and provide feedback, and to take the lead when required.

Combine these three elements and we think you'll have a great start towards building a force who will work enthusiastically and efficiently; and will stay with you far into the future.

Cross -Talk:

Sharing the Best from **ADMINISTRATION**

Periodically we publish excerpts from the HQ-CAP-USAFA Inspector General report Cross -Talk to let you see the good work wing senior program directorates are doing around the country. You'll find selections from 1999's Cross-Talk below. These selections are reprinted here as they were written by the IG. We'll share more of CAP's best ideas in Senior Programs next year.

Senior Programs Officer developed a two-hour Level I Instructors Course which is normally presented at the wing conference. To qualify as a Level I instructor, members must attend this course and then serve as an assistant Level I instructor.

The Wing Commander had assigned the full-time wing employee as the Test Control Officer, and a volunteer as the alternate TCO. This provides excellent continuity for the wing's testing program, and almost guarantees the availability of the TCO for proctoring examinations.

All new members complete Level I training and CPPT at earliest opportunity; normally within the first three weeks. All current senior members have completed training.

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Director of Senior Programs maintains one complete Senior Programs Training library at the wing headquarters and one in his personal possession.

Director of Senior Programs distributes a quarterly newsletter to all units. This is a good means of passing information, as the wing currently has no PAO.

The wing conducted the first trial run of the new national Unit Commanders Course and is collating inputs for its improvement prior to nationwide release.

Senior members are receiving and displaying awards. This shows pride in the Civil Air Patrol and the members pride in their accomplishments.

A wing training staff provides support and guidance for all school directors.

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